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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2008

In Today's Papers

Land Forces Commander General Kosaner Briefs Media on Aktutun Attack

All papers gave extensive coverage to General Kosaner's press announcement regarding the investigation results from the General Staff regarding the October 3rd PKK attack against the Aktutun military outpost which left 17 soldiers dead. At a news briefing at the General Staff headquarters, General Kosaner said no flaws were found in military actions during the attack. Kosaner stressed that the images published in leftist Taraf daily were not images of Aktutun and, contrary to press reports, the people seen in the footage were not terrorists but farmers. General Kosaner noted that "American unmanned aircrafts receive the images and after filtering them, they pass it to Turkish General Staff headquarters. The TGS shares the information with the relevant offices. We cannot know whether the U.S. shares that intelligence with anybody else. Intelligence is to be shared. It is sent to many receivers. That is why a closed investigation was carried out without the possibility of leakage from various places."

Meanwhile, papers report that Chief of General Staff General Ilker Basbug attended yesterday's Council of Ministers' meeting and briefed the cabinet members about on the fight against terrorism. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that Basbug made a detailed presentation regarding the recent terrorist attack on Aktutun military outpost, the investigation, the steps needed to be taken in the fight against terrorism and the demands of the Turkish military.

Turkey Thumbs its Nose at the IMF

Media outlets report Prime Minister Erdogan has rejected claims that the global financial crisis is affecting Turkey and stepped up his criticism of the IMF. Media outlets are mixed in their coverage of Erdogan's defiance of the fund's loan conditions. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carries the front-page headline, "Defiance to the IMF," and reports, "Central Bank Governor Yilmaz says Turkey does not need the IMF's money." Mainstream Sabah reports, "The IMF's Plan is to Pressure Turkey" and outlines the IMF's "demands" by saying, "The IMF is against government plans to use funds to construct new roads

and to restructure tax debt," while the IMF "is pressuring the government to restrict public spending." Erdal Saglam, columnist for economic daily Referans, writes, "Everyone believes that Erdogan does not want to make a deal with the IMF because he does not want to curb municipal spending before the local elections in 2009." Saglam notes "the IMF delegation has been stunned by Erdogan's harsh words against the IMF," as "his statements lead one to assume the IMF is asking the government to cut spending." In a related article, Referans notes "the IMF wants the government to reduce current spending in order to use the funds to ease the pressure on the economy," while "the AKP government wants to increase spending in the lead up to the local municipal elections." In addition, the article reports, "The IMF is concerned about transparency regarding municipalities' spending," because "their budget is almost as large as the state budget." Columnist Ugur Gurses of liberal Radikal notes, "This crisis is global, but our mindset is still local," and "what needs to be done is to develop formulas in order to ensure credit flow," but "our government instead prefers to publicly defy the IMF." Okay Gonensin of mainstream Vatan says, "The PM is acting like the IMF is asking for some kind of favor from him and he is bravely fighting against the IMF," but "someone should explain to the PM that the IMF is trying to help Turkey."

A cartoon from today's Milliyet depicts Prime Minister Erdogan hanging by a thread and saying "Nothing can happen to us!"

Cartoon from today's Sabah in which a truck called "IMF" is depicted running over a Turk who is hitchhiking.

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#### Editorial Opinion on Turkey-IMF

Ugur Gurses wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Given the magnitude of the current global financial crisis, Turkey needs to develop formulas with the IMF and G-7 nations in order to ensure credit flow. Instead, our government prefers publicly defy the IF. While this economic crisis is certainly global, our mindset is still local."

Okay Gonensin wrote in mainstream Vatan: "PM Erdogan is scolding everyone to the point where he appears pathological. The IMF has had its share of his attitude. PM Erdogan not only scolded the IMF, but also acted as if the IMF was asking for some favor from Turkey and he is bravely fighting it! Someone should explain to the PM that the IMF is trying to help Turkey emerge from the global crisis with minimum damage. And of course, it should be explained to PM Erdogan that the economic crisis cannot be solved by scolding the IMF."

#### Widespread Protests for Kurdish Rights

All papers give extensive coverage to the aftermath of recent protest marches in many provinces organized by pro-Kurdish political party DTP, and focus on the statements from high level officials in the party. Ahmet Turk, Chairman of the DTP, told reporters on his way to Brussels that the protests should be considered 'normal' as they were reflecting democratic reaction. DTP's Parliament Group Chairman Selahattin Demirtas told the press of an upcoming action plan to protest alleged mistreatment of PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan. Demirtas told press of a two-day sit-in protest in Diyarbakir, and leftist Birgun mentions that it will start on November 1 and 5,000 people are expected to participate. Meanwhile papers carry Chairman Ahmet Turk's remarks that blame PM Erdogan and opposition CHP leader Baykal for creating tension in the region on the eve of local elections.

#### Editorial Opinion on PKK/Kurdish Problem

Fehmi Koru wrote in Islamist leaning Yeni Safak: "The Kurdish issue has polarized Turkey. When an issue is assessed in only black and white terms, solutions are rarely found. However Turkey must solve this problem now. The AKP has largely linked their solution process to upcoming local elections, however, in light of recent developments, this approach must be revised."

Barzani Transits Incirlik

Several media outlets report that Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government President Massoud Barzani transited Incirlik Air Force Base in Turkey on his way to the U.S. Kanal 24 carried the reports in straightforward coverage, while today's Hurriyet reports Turkey acted graciously toward Barzani by facilitating his travel to the U.S. In "Barzani Transits Incirlik for U.S. Tour," Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "Barzani was flown via U.S. military aircraft to Incirlik, where he transferred to a flight that took him to the U.S. for 'an official visit' with U.S. President George Bush."

#### Human Rights Stays on the Agenda

In "A Police Battalion against a Handful of Protesters," mainstream Hurriyet reports that 27 people protested the AKP in Ankara and all of them were detained. The protesters blamed the AKP government for the death of inmate Engin Ceper while he was undergoing police interrogation. Hurriyet, Yeni Safak and Radikal report an upcoming human rights review meeting by the Prime Ministry Human Right Board on October 30 will examine the case of Engin Ceper. Mainstream Vatan also reports the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission made a secret visit to the police station in Istanbul where Ceper was allegedly tortured to death.

#### War Breaks Out in Syria (Yeni Safak)

All media outlets are critical of the U.S. cross-border raid into Syria that killed eight civilians on Sunday. Mainstream Hurriyet

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carries the headline, "Yes, We Attacked," and reports, "Before, the U.S. said 'We don't have any information about an attack launched into Syria on Sunday,' but yesterday the U.S. military confirmed the strikes." In addition, Hurriyet notes, "Damascus has called the strikes 'criminal' and 'a terrorist attack.'" Mainstream Milliyet reports in "A Cross Border Operation against Al Qaeda Leaders," that "U.S. helicopters were targeting Al Qaeda leaders in Gahdiya, but instead the fifteen-minute attack killed eight civilians." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "America's Attack against Syria Angers Russia and Other Arab Nations." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports in "Enormous Rage In Response to the U.S. Attack," that "mourners at the funerals of the civilians killed in the raid shouted slogans against the U.S." while "Damascus publicly holds the U.S. responsible for the civilian deaths." Liberal Radikal reports, "Damascus is Beside Itself with Rage over the American Attack." Leftist Taraf writes, "Damascus Holds the U.S. Responsible for Whatever Results Come from the Attack." NTV reports the Syrian press says the raid constitutes "a war crime."

#### Editorial Opinion on U.S./Syria

Sami Kohen wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "The U.S. purposefully dispatched four military helicopters from a military base in Iraq in order to carry out a military operation 10 kilometers across the border into Syrian territory. This operation surprised the world and shocked Syria. Despite Syria's rapprochement with the West, the U.S. has never changed its stance against Syria. The Bush Administration continues to pursue a policy of isolation against Syria amid its allegations Syria supports terrorism. This recent incident will create further distance between the two countries. The U.S. is following the same kind of cross-border policy in Pakistan. In order to pursue Taliban terrorists who flee Afghanistan, the U.S. is launching occasional air operations into Pakistan. Thus, Pakistan's relations with the U.S. and Afghanistan are rather tense nowadays. America's cross-border operations into Syria and Pakistan are not solving the terrorism problem. On the contrary, these operations are creating political problems. Of course, no country has the right to violate the sovereignty of another country. But in order to prevent such violations of sovereignty, no country should allow others to use its territory as a base from which attacks can be launched into other countries."

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Former Ambassador Mark Parris' Advice for next U.S. President  
Media outlets report former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Mark Parris issued advice to the next U.S. president in an article entitled "Common Values and Common Interests - The Bush Legacy in US-Turkish Relations," in the latest edition of a quarterly journal published by the Turkey-based SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research called "Insight Turkey." Mainstream Milliyet carries the headline, "Mark Parris: The New President Must Place Turkey at the Top of the List," and notes Parris wrote, "Ties have deteriorated between the U.S. and Turkey during the Bush administration." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "Whoever wins the U.S. election will have a more positive image in Turkish public opinion by simply not being George Bush." CNN Turk says Parris "urges the next U.S. president to give Turkey top priority."

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Erdogan Sends Advisors to the U.S.  
Mainstream Hurriyet and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet report that Prime Minister Erdogan has sent two advisors, chief foreign affairs advisor Ahmet Davutoglu and AKP Vice Chair for Foreign Affairs Suat Kiniklioglu, to meet with the foreign affairs advisors of both the Obama and McCain campaigns. Hurriyet reports Erdogan's envoys will address key bilateral issues with the campaigns, including the cooperation against the PKK, Iraq's stability, the Caucasus Platform proposal, Turkey's efforts to expand ties with Armenia, and Turkey's efforts to promote peace in the Middle East. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet, meanwhile, reports that Erdogan "preferred to send his own advisors instead of sending officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," to discuss these key bilateral issues with the presidential campaigns.

TV News:  
NTV

Domestic News

The General Staff briefed the Council of Ministers on developments in the fight against terror.

President Gul says he is ready to give up his authority to appoint university rectors.

Turkey extends support to Ukraine's NATO membership.

Opposition party MHP starts preparations for the municipality elections.

Prime Minister Erdogan will go to the U.S. next month.

A court in Istanbul declares a news blackout in connection with the death of Engin Ceber, who died as a result of torture while in police custody.

World News

Monday's Gallup Poll: Obama holds a commanding 52-42 percent lead over John McCain among all voters.

WILSON